



# News Release

## WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Leaders from Wisconsin infantry battalion prepare for mission with Iraq visit

*by Capt. Benjamin Buchholz  
2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry*

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. — Five senior leaders from 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry flew to Iraq in late June to meet the unit they will replace, clarify mission details and see firsthand the living conditions the unit's 600-plus soldiers should expect.

The unit will serve as an armed escort for civilian and military convoys traveling from Kuwait north through the entire country of Iraq, protecting supplies that allow security operations and the transition to peace to succeed. The unit will conduct operations in Iraq from a Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Kuwait that has many of the same amenities as an Army post or a small town in the United States: a post exchange, shoppette, weight room, dining facility, internet cafe, theater, pizza parlor, coffee shop, and even a volleyball court — sand, of course. The soldiers will live in air-conditioned tents rather than barracks.

Lt. Col. Todd Taves, the unit's commander, along with Maj. John Oakley, Maj. David Aponte, Capt. Frank Iovine, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde participated in actual convoys, received updates on the activities of anti-Iraqi forces in the area, and coordinated a smooth in-processing for the unit's personnel and equipment when they arrive in August. The visit provided the battalion with information to help tailor training to the unit's specific mission. The unit will now devote more time to driving up-armored HMMWVs with convoys and less time to room-to-room searches, FOB defense, check-point operations and the many other tasks the unit might otherwise have been assigned.

As the battalion's command sergeant major and senior noncommissioned officer, Conde's primary task on the visit was to assess the FOB's living accommodations for the troops. He was pleased with what he saw.

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“Other than the heat, which was like hitting a wall when we got off the plane, my biggest concern is the food,” said Conde, “and not because it’s bad. Just the opposite: it’s too good. The FOB serves four meals a day, buffet-style, and if we don’t have a good physical fitness program we’ll return to Wisconsin a little too healthy.”

The other amenities all met Conde’s standard.

Because so many local groups, schools, families, and communities have asked what they can do to make the deployment a better experience, the battalion will identify a local charity in Iraq and organize donations to that charity on behalf of the battalion’s supporters. Contributions to these efforts will indirectly improve the quality of life for the battalion soldiers because they will help win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis among whom the Wisconsin soldiers will live for the next year.

For information on donating to the 2-127th’s local Iraqi charity, email Capt. Benjamin Buchholz, battalion civil affairs officer: [benjamin.buchholz@us.army.mil](mailto:benjamin.buchholz@us.army.mil).

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**Note to Editors: The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry is headquartered in Appleton with units in Waupun, Ripon, Green Bay, Fond du Lac and Marinette. The battalion was mobilized June 6 and departed Wisconsin June 9 for several months additional training at Camp Shelby, near Hattiesburg, Miss.**

**The infantry battalion was augmented by soldiers from the Onalaska-based 32nd Engineer Company and from Troop E, 105th Cavalry of Antigo and Merrill.**

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